United Nations E/2001/76

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
30 May 2001

Original: English

Substantive session of 2001
Geneva, 2-27 July 2001
Item 14 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Social and human rights questions: advancement of women

Revitalization and strengthening of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2000/24 of 28 July 2000, adopted at its substantive session of 2000, took note of the reports of the Board of Trustees (E/2000/58) and of the Director of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) (E/2000/59) and commended the Institute for undertaking important measures for its revitalization, in particular the development and the launching of the prototype of its Gender Awareness Information and Networking System (GAINS). It acknowledged with appreciation the support of Governments and organizations that have contributed to the revitalization of the Institute. It further expressed grave concern that, despite efforts by the Institute, the level of contributions has not increased to a level that would enable the Institute to continue operations beyond 31 December 2000.

2. In the same resolution, the Council urged the Institute to improve its financial situation by continuing to explore new and innovative means of funding. It also urged the Secretary-General to: (a) continue to invite Member States to contribute to the United Nations Trust Fund for the Institute; (b) to encourage other relevant sources of funding within the United Nations, such as the United Nations Foundation, to contribute to the restructuring of the Institute.

3. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 10 of Council resolution 2000/24. The report outlines the efforts made by the United Nations Secretariat and the Institute to improve its financial situation and to explore new sources of funding. The report also assesses prospects for securing the Institute's sustainability beyond December 2001.

II. Activities of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women in pursuance of paragraph 7 of Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/24

4. As requested by the Economic and Social Council in resolution 2000/24, the Institute has engaged in the development and implementation of a fund-raising

* E/2001/100.

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strategy to ensure its continuation beyond 2000. This strategy includes initiating fund-raising campaigns with Member States of the United Nations, developing publicity/communications materials, demonstrating pilot projects of GAINS, forging key partnerships and undertaking collaborative projects with other organizations within and outside of the United Nations system and identifying non-traditional funding sources.

5. During 2000, in an effort to restore confidence in the Institute and attract the support of former donors, the Institute's Director held meetings with representatives of the following Member States: Australia, Austria, Dominican Republic, Greece, Japan, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, South Africa, Spain and the United States of America; as well as with intergovernmental organizations, including the European Commission and the International Organization of la Francophonie. In cooperation with the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Director established contacts with the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships and with other United Nations entities, in particular those dealing with gender, economic and social issues and the community of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). During the meetings of intergovernmental forums, including the Commission on the Status of Women, the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly on "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", the substantive session of 2000 of the Economic and Social Council and the Millennium Assembly, the Director held regular debriefing sessions with delegations and regional groups, including the European Union and the Group of 77 and China, on progress in implementation of the Institute's revitalization programme. On two occasions, during the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and the substantive session of 2000 of the Economic and Social Council, representatives of the Institute demonstrated pilot projects of GAINS.

6. Further efforts were made to explore new funding sources and to gain access to these sources. With the assistance of a fund-raising and communications consulting firm, the Institute developed a list of potential new funding sources, as well as the publicity and communications materials to reach them. The publicity materials have been used to raise public awareness of the capabilities of GAINS through potential donors and partners. For example, during the forty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2001, the Institute maintained a booth with a permanent display of materials, including a presentation on GAINS prepared by the consulting firm. These materials have also been used for distribution during the Director's missions to Belgium, Greece, Italy and Spain.

7. The Institute also worked at expanding links and building partnerships with relevant organizations within and outside the United Nations system for collaborative initiatives and cost-sharing. It initiated contacts for the development of a memorandum of understanding with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and agreed to a "cooperative framework" with the Business Women's Network. The Institute also approached non-traditional partners such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)/Development Assistance Committee, the European Union and the Caribbean Community to forge closer links. In addition, the Institute engaged in piloting the GAINS research and training methodologies with United Nations funds and programmes such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), as well as with private foundations and NGOs, including the Rockefeller Foundation, the International White Ribbon Campaign, Sisterhood is Global International and the Mediterranean Women's Studies Centre. Negotiations are also under way with the World Bank to establish closer collaboration between GAINS and the World Bank's Global Development Gateway initiative. As a result of enhanced cooperation between the Institute and the World University Service of Canada, an intern was sponsored by the University Service to work with the Institute for a six-month period.

8. In an effort to diversify its funding sources, the Institute prepared a portfolio of special projects for which it has been seeking funding aside from government contributions from sources such as the Italian Development Cooperation through the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the European Commission. Contacts continue with the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships to fund an institution-building project prepared by the Institute through the development of GAINS. A new proposal for the subsequent implementation of phases

III and IV of GAINS has also been submitted to the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships.

III. Secretariat support to secure an adequate financial base for the Institute and its continuity beyond 31 December 2000

9. Some Secretariat activities in support of the Institute mandated by General Assembly resolution 54/140 and Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/24 are outlined in the report of the Secretary-General to the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly on the activities of the Institute (A/55/385, paras. 20-26). In brief, these activities focused on setting up the Institute's new structure and improving its financial situation. A series of donors meetings, fund-raising letters and notes verbales, multilateral and bilateral meetings with donors and interested States were held with a view to encourage voluntary contributions. Demonstrations of GAINS were organized for the benefit of delegations and the NGO community. Several meetings were held in the framework of the Administrative Committee on Coordination Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality to inform United Nations entities about GAINS and to secure their support.

10. At its fifty-fifth session, the General Assembly, in paragraph 6 of its resolution 55/219 of 22 December 2000, decided to provide the Institute with financial assistance on a non-recurrent basis. Having discussed the relevant aspects and modalities of the financial assistance, the General Assembly decided to advance the Institute an amount of up to $800,000 for 2001, pending receipt of voluntary contributions, on a one-time, exceptional and emergency basis (see Assembly decision 55/457 of 23 December 2000 (para. 3 (b))). In the same decision, the Assembly further decided that, if voluntary contributions were insufficient to meet the Institute's requirements for 2001, that the amount advanced, less voluntary contributions received, would be considered a one-time-only subvention and that the resources utilized under the terms of that subvention would be reported in the context of the second performance report on the programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001.

11. Following the fifty-fifth session, the efforts of the Secretariat were focused at several levels: former and potential donors and interested Member States, United Nations organizations and other relevant sources of funding within the United Nations system. In particular, the Secretariat was focused on securing projects for the Institute where its expertise in the use of new information and communication technologies would be useful.

12. Bilateral contacts with donors and interested States at all levels, including at the ministerial level, continued throughout the reporting period with a view to raising awareness of GAINS and the advantages of the use of the new working methods by the Institute in promoting gender equality.

13. During a joint workshop of the OECD/ Development Assistance Committee and the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality on governance, poverty reduction and gender equality, held at Vienna from 23 to 25 April 2001, the Director of the Institute had an opportunity to consult with both the Assistance Committee and United Nations entities on the future of the Institute and implementation of GAINS.

14. Despite the repeated urgent appeals for government contributions made by the Secretariat and the Director of the Institute, the total reserves and fund balances available in the United Nations Trust Fund for the Institute as at 31 December 2000 amounted to $702,303, whereas the estimated budget of the Institute for 2001, as submitted by the Institute for approval by the Board of Trustees, amounts to $1,299,850. After November 2000, the Institute received $133,833 in voluntary contributions for 2000 and for previous years from the following Member States: Greece, Mexico, the Netherlands, Malta and Spain, thus bringing the total received in 2000 to $523,980. This is the lowest amount of contributions received by the Institute in the past 10 years. At the November 2000 United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities only $30,000 was pledged for the Institute/GAINS for 2001. As of 10 May 2001, only $52,602 was pledged for 2001 and $82,538, including contributions pledged for prior years ($68,015) was received. The gap between the level of voluntary contributions and the proposed budget of the Institute for 2001 will have to bridged from the regular budget as approved by the General Assembly. While the financial situation of the Institute for 2001 is assured, it will face yet another financial crisis at the end of 2001 or the beginning of 2002.

IV. Conclusion

15. The years 2001 and 2002 are critical transitional years in the implementation of the new working method of the Institute. During 2001, the Institute will continue to expand and fine-tune GAINS. The first two stages of design and initial implementation of GAINS are near completion. In 2001, the system will be expanded to include cutting edge hardware and software and the gender resource database. A language component will be added. The system's accessibility will be improved by the addition of interactive tools and facilities for collaborative research and training methodologies. The next and final stage, as planned, would complete the design and expansion of GAINS by adding a system for comprehensive monitoring and evaluation in order to provide feedback for the further adaptation and development of the GAINS infrastructure.

16. It is clear that, without a substantial influx of voluntary contributions during 2001, the efforts and resources expended by the Institute and the United Nations Secretariat to reposition the Institute to play a dynamic role within the United Nations and to contribute to the achievement of gender equality and the advancement of women may not be sustainable beyond 2001. Despite every effort made by the Secretariat, the Director and the staff of the Institute to secure support and adequate funding from Member States and elsewhere, the Institute's full transition in 2002 to the new working method mandated by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council is not assured owing to insufficient reserves in the Institute's Trust Fund. Bearing in mind that the Institute only has the necessary resources to complete two stages of GAINS in 2001, it would be unrealistic to expect that it will be able to deliver a final product in the same year. Unless Member States take effective measures at the Council's substantive session of 2001 to ensure the financial sustainability of the Institute beyond 2001, it will face closure by the end of the year.